Observations and Recommendations

Organizational review of general government operations for the City of Davis

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April 2015
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## Observations and Recommendations

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Comment from the author
I am pleased to submit this report on administrative and management issues affecting the City of Davis. It was energizing to interview many members of the city staff, and I am impressed by the enthusiasm they hold for public service. I hope this report brings value to this very special community.

  John Meyer
Introduction

With a newly constituted City Council and newly appointed City Manager, it was deemed timely to review aspects of the City of Davis organization. After several preliminary meetings with the City Manager, we agreed on a review that would focus on three principal areas: organizational structure, organizational climate and customer service focus. As mentioned in my original proposal, this review does not include the two public safety departments and no detailed recommendations are made related to the Police and Fire Departments, although I do include a significant general comment related to the Fire Department.

Process and disclaimers
The information gained for this assessment relied on staff interviews, examination of recent consultant-based department reviews and evaluation of other city documents. The bulk of interviews occurred January through mid-February. Some subsequent interviews were undertaken after an initial draft report was prepared to check facts and gain clarifying information.

Given that much of this report is based on interviews, it should not be thought of as a reflection of “truths” but rather a collection of observations and impressions. As we all know, perceptions shared by others through interviews often reflect facts, but we must acknowledge that there can remain many different perspectives of recent history.

A priority of mine was to be prompt in delivery of this material allowing some recommendations to be considered as part of the city’s budget process. In addition, embarking on such a project creates a certain level of expectation and anxiety and I wanted to report my findings, for better or worse, so the city organization can move forward in a positive direction. With such speed however, I must acknowledge the depth of review in some areas may not be ideal. In addition, this report should not be thought of as a comprehensive list of organizational issues, but rather a summary of those issues most apparent at this time. While I am confident with what is reported here, some individuals may certainly disagree with my findings and recommendations. Other views should be welcomed to ensure the city pursues the recommendations that will be most helpful.

I must also add that the findings of the report are my own and have not been directed or amended by anyone within the organization.
Context and recent history
The recent decade was one of unprecedented economic turmoil. The so-called Great Recession was of a depth and duration never before experienced by most of those in the workplace. This period of distress was preceded by a period of such great exuberance that many neglected the oft used financial disclosure that “current trends are not a guarantee of future performance.” Thus, governments (and private corporations) and their employees were expecting that continued high rates of investment return would fully fund pension and other like programs. In addition, robust benefit obligations had often grown over time due to these trends. As more scrutiny was applied to the financial support for such benefits, some were often found to be of questionable long-term viability.

The stress caused by benefit obligations and significant declines in tax revenues, was worsened in California with the elimination of redevelopment agencies. With redevelopment agencies, cities received a much larger share of property tax revenues. These steep revenue declines and expense trend increases came with such speed that dramatic and swift measures were necessary across most local governments.

It is within this fiscal context that many organizational and budget changes were made within the City of Davis. It is important to note that these trends were experienced by local governments throughout the state and nation. Davis is not unique in its financial hardships. However, given that the economic decline was so dire, each local government will necessarily need to develop its own strategy to address their circumstances and rebuild a sound financial framework.

Observations and Recommendations

Overriding issues
City staff remain dedicated to public service
I begin with a finding that is encouraging, heartwarming and, based on my previous experience, not at all surprising. The ranks of city staff remain full of individuals still fully committed to public service and dedicated to finding efficient ways to continue the delivery of services. This is not to say they are not highly critical of some of the methods and style used to achieve budget reductions. Indeed, they seem to fully recognize larger economic trends and that expenditure reductions were necessary. However, most individuals were critical of the manner in which budget reductions were communicated and that there seemed to be more outreach with community than with staff. Staff seems committed to public service despite their concern with historic leadership.
Significant accomplishments in a period of economic turmoil

Even during a period of unprecedented financial challenges, the City made substantial progress on many important issues in recent years. Despite the resulting internal hardships, budget reductions were made that were essential to improving financial stability. More work is required, but such actions were necessary to avoid the need for even more draconian measures. Extraordinary capital projects, led by the surface water project and the wastewater treatment plant renovation were launched. Renewed attention to deferred maintenance has been achieved. More consolidated processing through a “one-stop” development services counter was completed. Steps have been taken to increase economic development efforts as well as to heighten awareness of sustainability issues. That such major initiatives were undertaken during a period of economic crisis is admirable and reflects leadership at the policy and executive level.

Lack of stability and tenure in executive leadership erodes culture

Historically (and perhaps ironically) many college towns were known for very active and sometimes volatile city councils, yet retained long-term City Managers. This has not been the recent experience in Davis. In the last fifteen years, Davis has had seven interim and permanent managers, while in the previous thirty four years it had four. This is very worrisome in that an organization’s culture and values cannot take root with such constant transition in leadership. In addition, if change is desired, those not supportive may simply decide to “wait it out” given that there will likely be new leadership in a year or two. Developing a unified and supportive tone between the City Council and City Manager is essential in successfully communicating the desired values and culture for the City organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City Manager tenure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Howard Reese</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966-2000 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-present (7)</td>
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</tbody>
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Develop mission/vision/values statement

Besides public safety departments, it does not appear that other departments have developed mission/vision/value statements. In addition, public safety departments have some form of strategic plans while general government departments do not. Rather than having each department develop such statements, this may be an appropriate time for the general government departments to develop a joint statement of mission/vision/values to better articulate the purpose and style of their services and to establish a standard by which all can be held accountable. Concern has been expressed by staff that actions have not matched organizational values, yet such values have not been...
defined. The current work with the City Council and Department Heads to establish comprehensive goals and objectives is a positive start to this effort.

**Need renewal and enhancements of administrative systems**

In a situation typical of many local governments, few investments have been made to update and improve administrative systems. The financial and budget system used by the City is decades old. GIS systems are not used in a robust fashion to manage assets and coordinate projects. Basic administrative tracking systems do not seem in place for items such as contracts and employee evaluations. A deeper assessment of administrative systems should be made to ensure staff has access to sound and accurate information. Such tools are especially necessary as the number of staff to process work have been reduced.

**Organizational Climate**

**There is cautious optimism, but swift and decisive actions are required to demonstrate values and commitment**

With a newly established City Council and new City Manager, staff members have expressed optimism about the direction of the City, but are cautious and are awaiting more signs of positive change. They appreciate the initial outreach efforts and style of the new City Manager; however, most are reserving judgment until they see decisive action on issues they deem of greatest importance.

**Council intervention has confused the council-manager model**

While Davis has long had active and involved City Councils, many staff believe that some on previous Councils have gone beyond a policy and oversight function to have increasing direct dealings with staff members. This could also be a symptom of high turnover with City Managers, where administrative leadership does not have continuity and, therefore a Council member may step in. Obviously, direction provided to staff that bypasses the City Manager is confusing at best and erodes this model of governance. There may be value to assuring there are mutually agreed “rules of engagement” and/or that the City Council Procedures Manual be re-activated and updated to reflect current sensibilities.

**While need for budget reductions widely acknowledged, perceived lack of engagement with staff has left widespread bitterness**

As previously mentioned, staff seem to fully understand the economic forces that required budget reductions. However, there is a widely held view that limited communication to staff on budget reductions aggravated an already difficult situation. Certainly, there was urgency to implement budget reductions, but
Some events have achieved the status of legend within the organization. Specifically,

- Some senior managers first learned their positions were eliminated when organization charts were published within the budget document that did not include their positions. No one personally informed these individuals of this circumstance before it was made public.
- Certain parks staff were laid off the day after a parks tax passed.
- Frustration was expressed over the amounts paid for outside labor negotiator, recent city hall reconfiguration, senior management positions and consultants while staff was being laid off.
- On one day, several long-term personnel within Public Works, representing over 90 years of combined service, left the city due to layoffs and downsizing. No expression of gratitude or appreciation for such long periods of service was ever provided by management.

Need to rebuild relationships and trust
Given the lasting perception about the events listed above, much work is required to reestablish trust between staff and the City Council/City Manager. It is important to note that staff believes previous City Council’s were complicit in the actions above. Regardless of whether Council members are aware of any specific action, staff believes they must at least have been accepting of such actions.

Any rebuilding of trust should be undertaken incrementally and with specific actions and examples. Any attempt to instantly resolve morale issues with a grand gesture will likely met with cynicism. As one long-term staff member with an interest in this issue shared, “parties do not create morale, morale creates parties.” It also must be recognized that recent exercises to acknowledge staff have been somewhat underwhelming. Apparently, due to budget reductions rather than being provided some modest gift to recognize a major anniversary of City service (e.g., pen set, belt buckle) staff were provided with a color Xerox copy of a belt buckle. At such times, a sincere “thank you” may have more impact than a picture of a gift we wish we could afford.

Reset approach to negotiations
In many literal ways, the value of staff is often reflected within the contract negotiation process. In recent years, budget reductions have been necessary. Given that the bulk of the budget encompasses compensation, this inevitably means reductions or caps on salary and benefits. Those employee associations that believe they were the most understanding of city needs also believe they suffered the greatest degree of reduction while less cooperative groups fared better. Other groups continue to question the good faith aspect of the process.
Clearly, negotiations, especially in times of reductions, are likely to become divisive. It is important for the Council and Manager to recognize the hangover that exists from recent negotiation processes. It may be that the current environment allows for a renewed pledge that negotiations, to the extent possible, should strive to meet mutual objectives.

While the current complexities of negotiations likely require outside assistance, it would be valuable for the City Manager to establish a relationship and “human face” with each employee association. It should be assumed that if negotiations are contracted out, that the content, style and conduct of those negotiations will reflect on the City Council and Manager.

Belief that there has been a lack of focused vision; some recent City Council goals met with bemusement
It is widely believed that goals established by previous City Councils have been vast and lacked focus. They are thought to be a collection of aspirations rather than a framework that establishes true priorities. Staff often stated that especially in a period of staff reductions, more projects and tasks seemed to arise. One example frequently cited was discussion for the city to pursue development of its own power utility. While achievement of lower power rates would be laudable, such an enormous project did not seem to reflect sensitivity that staff forces were simultaneously being reduced.

There is recognition that the new round of City Council goal setting has attempted to bring more focus to work planning. This has generally been welcomed; however a few initial goals were met by some with amusement and skepticism and are highlighted below.

- “Establish/maintain employment contracts that are fiscally sustainable and competitive with other agencies” (was questioned by one employee association since a list of comparison agencies that had been previously included in contracts to assess market competitiveness had been removed)
- “Work with local travel agencies to provide information on vacation planning” (viewed with some cynicism after reduction of salaries and benefits)

These have been removed from subsequent drafts.

Develop some gauge or metrics to better assess workload
Many remaining staff expressed fatigue and frustration that even with a reduced workforce, projects and workload seemed to be increasing. This is difficult to quantify, but some effort should be expended to ensure workload meets a standard of reasonableness. Developing a positive and balanced worklife for employees is essential to retaining and recruiting the talent that Davis requires.
It may well be that in certain areas (e.g., maintenance/utility workers, planners) that reductions do not allow for the same amount of services to be performed unless additional positions are filled.

**Staff is appreciative of renewed training; appetite for much more**

As expense reductions across most public agencies were beginning, training was often one of the first activities to be cut from budgets. While a short-term method to gain savings, it is not sustainable especially when staffing levels are dramatically reduced. Indeed, the need for training increases dramatically as many positions that left city service were personnel with the greatest level of experience. The Human Resources unit has recently reinstated some limited training programs. This is acknowledged and appreciated. A great appetite for additional training programs exists. It is recommended that future training programs be tied to employee development plans to ensure instruction is linked to specific needs.

**Reinstate requirement for annual employee evaluations**

A universal truth of the work place is that most supervisors do not like preparing employee evaluations. Other than public safety departments, it appears that most units do not regularly prepare employee evaluations. There is no standard evaluation form or system and a supervisor’s performance is not judged on whether evaluations are completed. Many employees have gone years without an evaluation. Human Resources should establish a uniform process for general employees. Such a system should be automated to ease the administrative burden of this process.

**Begin a succession planning process**

Through budget reductions and natural trends, the city has recently experienced a major departure of personnel having very long tenures. An evaluation of the current workforce will likely reveal that another wave of highly experienced employees, some in very critical positions, will soon leave City service. Based on such analysis, succession planning should be undertaken with an emphasis to develop internal talent qualified to serve in interim roles and, as appropriate, ascend to higher positions.

In addition, consideration should be given to recognizing and designating certain key long-term employees as mentors to train other staff and transfer knowledge. Honoring such employees may help retain and engage them for a meaningful transition period.
Adopt principles of professional and respectful engagement
Staff in public service are well versed in dealing with the irate citizen or an individual who is upset for various reasons. However, in my interviews many examples were cited of a previous City Council member yelling at or degrading a staff member. In addition, complaints were expressed about a city commissioner exhibiting behaviors that were demeaning to staff. Certainly such behaviors can be interpreted differently by each party—my point is that in a period of staffing reductions and compensation caps, it is more important than ever to establish the expectation of respectful engagement. Certainly individuals can disagree on policy matters or how a program is implemented, but the City Council and City Manager must publically enforce professional and civil interaction with staff.

Organizational Structure

Reconstitute the Parks and Community Service Department
As a result of budget reductions and the elimination of the department head position, supervision of the Parks and Community Services Department was assigned to the Human Resources Administrator. Initially, parks maintenance personnel were assigned to Public Works. Later, this decision was rescinded and all maintenance personnel, in addition to recreation and other programs reported to the Human Resources Administrator through two Community Services Supervisors. One exception is that, for reasons I cannot ascertain, the urban forestry program remains in Public Works. It would seem this position is better suited to the Parks mission.

To underscore the awkwardness of this arrangement: the Parks and Community Services Department reports to the Human Resources Administrator who, in turn, reports to the Administrative Services Director who then reports to the City Manager. This raises several concerns. First, there is an awkward process conflict—a Parks employee having a personnel issue or wishing to file a grievance knows that the issue will be appropriately directed through his/her department head. Although, in this structure, the department head is the Human Resources Administrator—a position that should be the neutral official in such cases.

In addition, even if this potential for conflict can be managed, the City of Davis Parks and Community Services program is of such scope that it should be overseen by a professional in this field. The City Council and Manager should express gratitude to the Human Resources Administrator for willingness to oversee this major function; however, both the Parks and Community Services Department and the Human Resources unit require distinct and dedicated oversight.
oversight. Indeed, the number of staff dedicated to the HR function is very small and the needs of the organization in this area are great.

**Formally rescind merger of Community Development and Public Works**

In recent years, the department heads for Public Works and Community Development have reported to a position entitled General Manager. This position was to oversee all development and infrastructure including capital projects. While there is merit in this approach, such coordination never materialized. For example, no staff meetings were ever convened including the key leadership of these two departments. By all reports, the individual in the General Manager position was highly productive and helped navigate the water supply and waste water treatment plant projects to success. However, with this position now vacant and the capital projects underway, the city would be better served by these department heads reporting directly to the City Manager and resources from the General Manager position being reallocated to needs within these departments.

**Evaluate supervisor to staff ratios**

It is typical in a period of budget cutbacks that staffing reductions are undertaken through a combination of retirements, layoffs and staff turnover. This often results in an uneven distribution of the workforce that is based on chance as much as strategy. This results in a very uneven distribution of workload. Some supervisors have gained a dramatic increase in scope and responsibility and gained more staff.

In other areas, it appears that supervisors have a relatively small number of staff they are assigned to supervise. More striking is that in isolated cases a supervisor (A) then is assigned to a more senior supervisor (B) who has no other units to oversee. There certainly could be other factors to explain this circumstance.

In contrast to this trend, it appears that the Public Works Director may be supervising too many managers given the scope and complexity of his position. Some of these managers, in turn, do not seem to have responsibility for other staff and could be consolidated into other units.

**Examine value of more flexible position classification system**

With a reduction in the workforce, it may be that more flexibility and parity should be explored in job classifications. For example, it was suggested that some of the maintenance worker and utility worker classifications could be broadened, so staff could more readily cross boundaries (e.g., water, transportation, and
wastewater) as work load demanded. This may raise complications as some positions require special licenses, but it is worthy of exploration. It also appears that the concept of job “families” (i.e., those positions grouped together to define layoff bumping rights) should be evaluated as this concept can have significant consequences during periods of staff downsizing.

Assess current contract services
As part of its budget reduction strategy, many activities within park maintenance are now provided under contract to private firms. Now having some extended experience with this approach, it is timely to review the division of work between city forces and contractors to determine if it is achieving service and budgetary objectives.

Enhance role of Deputy City Manager
The Deputy City Manager is very often cited as a position that employees go to for answers. In addition to overseeing the City Clerk function and assisting with agenda preparation, the Deputy position supervises city communications, promotions, media services and housing programs. As can often be the case, over time the position has been assigned various functions. This may especially be the case as the current incumbent has served seven city managers. Consideration should be given to re-envisioning this position to both focus and broaden its scope as it may be able to provide even more assistance to the City Manager. The Deputy City Manager may have a role to play in coordinating space planning with a focus on customer service as described later in the report.

Some City Council goals may not be aligned with resources
The City Council and staff have expended much needed effort on developing a list of goals which can be incorporated into work plans with the expectation that metrics will be developed to measure progress and success. From my review of the organizational structure, two groups of goals appear to be extensive, yet may not have adequate resources to meet expectations.

Sustainability. Council goals reflect the concept of creating a sustainable community. The importance of this value was reflected in amending the name of the Community Development Department to become Community Development and Sustainability. One challenge with this program is that “sustainability” can be both vague and all-inclusive. It must be approached carefully within an organization so an impression is not created that only one staff member is responsible for the issue. Indeed, such a program must involve not only all staff, but the community. Currently, this function is staffed by a single sustainability manager. Aspects of the program are supported by other city positions that at one time were to have reported to the sustainability manager. While further
review would be required to identify the best structure for this program, with such lofty (and Davis appropriate) aspirations, I question whether the program can make desired progress without additional support.

**Economic Development.** The current investment in economic development activities may not yet be sufficient to meet defined Council objectives. The Council’s goals are reliant on successful economic development efforts that will result in diversifying the local economy, capturing emerging research-based businesses and improving the tax base. In support of economic development activities, a previous Council created a Chief Innovation Officer position. Not only was the title of the position unique, but originally, partial funding support for the position was to be provided by the business community. Economic development officials share something in common with governors and presidents—it is difficult to quantify their contribution to the economic activity, but they often get credit or blame depending on economic trends.

The interview process revealed some concerns about the salary level of this position and what its actual output has been. While this leads some to question this expenditure, I believe the City should “double-down” on its investment in economic development activities. The City is developing a reputation of supporting business development. A number of major businesses have chosen to locate in Davis. Should the City now dim its focus and investment in economic development, that action will be broadcast throughout the region by your competitors. While our regional leaders are all polite and publicly supportive of one another, any move by Davis to reduce investment in economic development activities will be branded as a lack of support and will be whispered by surrounding communities to businesses under recruitment. Davis has assets that other communities envy, but only Davis can tell this story—do not expect others to do this on your behalf.

**Loss of department brands is missed opportunity**

Due to a variety of issues, I believe two departments have experienced erosion of their brands and reputations. That is, the public does not assign the value they did previously to these departments. This harms the City in several ways. It is important that the community see that its tax dollars are providing valuable services. This is a prerequisite to any request for more resources to be raised in support of city activities—the public must know that its local government is working together in a unified direction. When a department is dispersed or allowed to be disparaged this harms the entire organization.

**Parks and Community Services.** As mentioned previously, the department has had oversight from the Human Resources Administrator. While the individual
has served admirably, the department has lost much of its identity. Department management is spread across multiple locations. The former Parks public service counter in city hall is now occupied by cubicle work spaces for finance staff. The department does not seem to be a coherent entity and is suffering from numerous reorganizations and reassignments. Many staff did not know what their department name was at the moment—a minor issue to be sure, but a sign that some rebuilding and communication is needed. The department is full of dedicated employees, but has signs of “change fatigue” and desires a stable future. This is especially important if Council embarks on its community health objectives.

Fire Department. The scope of this review does not include the two public safety departments. However, the fire department was mentioned often in staff interviews. Much of the comments described general staff feelings about firefighter contract negotiations. I do not see value in reporting those comments, but will use them to make a larger point about the brand of the Fire Department and its value to the city. In past years, there has been much commentary about a grand jury report, internal investigations and campaign contributions. This, in combination with difficult contract negotiations, has seemed to cause some distance between City leadership and firefighters. It is in the City’s and community’s interest to reset this relationship. The two public safety departments provide some of the most essential city services. Firefighters are called upon to address events and circumstances that are often dire. They represent the essence of public service—highly trained and dedicated to serving the community. Perhaps more than any other city function, when they show up, people want to see them.

I do not discount past issues that have arisen, but a recently constituted Council has the opportunity to begin anew. This does not mean that difficulties with negotiations will dissipate, but they should be separated from support of the department and its staff. It is not shocking that union leadership advocates for its members. And we can disagree on tactics that are sometimes deployed, but the services that the firefighters and their managers provide should be more broadly embraced. Rather than supporting a narrative that firefighters are somehow a third-rail not to be touched, it should be recognized that this service was the foundation of establishing the city in the first place. While the events that have led to this strained relationship are real, it may be time to signal a new relationship based upon principles of professionalism and respect.

Acknowledging staff resources necessary to support commission system
A large number of commissions provide the City Council with advice on a wide variety of subjects. The number of advisory groups is unique for a community of
this size, but also provides a volume of expertise that if assigned a market value would be extraordinary. The commission system is also one of the principal ways community members are engaged in the governance process. It also allows for broad participation beyond the mandatory bodies including the City Council, planning commission and personnel board.

While some modest actions were taken to consolidate or otherwise reduce the number of commissions, should the City Council decide the current size and scope of commissions is ideal, there should be better understanding of the time required by staff to properly support commissions. In addition, some improved process should be designed to gauge workload. One important question is: are commissions required to gain Council approval before generating projects or tasks that require a significant amount of staff time? Furthermore, commission members should be subject to the same standard of professional engagement with staff that was addressed earlier.

**Determine progress towards findings of recent management reviews**
Consultant prepared management reviews and studies have been undertaken for Public Works, Finance and aspects of Parks and Community Services in recent years. It is unclear what level of review and follow-up there was to these projects. Given the expense and effort that likely went into each of these reports, department heads should provide an update on actions taken in response to each report’s findings. A listing of such reports appears in Appendix A.

**Establish clear understanding of responsibility for processing contracts**
There have been several instances where major city contracts have not been processed properly and, therefore, it is unlikely they could be enforced. A simple process should be instituted to monitor contracts either within each department or through a central entity such as the City Clerk.

**Customer Service Focus**

**Update and improve website**
Websites, of course, have become an initial resource for individuals who seek information about most topics. The City converted to a new website format several years ago. The migration to the new website did not include all the information previously provided. The site is universally acknowledged by staff to be lacking in many features for both their use and that of community members. As currently designed it seems confusing and is not intuitive or typical of the quality provided by cities of similar size. The current home page has nearly forty
elements from which to choose from. Basic information is lacking such as a directory of staff email addresses and other contact information.

A project to update the website has been under review for several years using multiple consultants. It appears a new site will be launched in the near future. Part of the plodding nature of the project appears to be management’s belief that a previous Council member wanted to be consulted on issues including colors and font types and sizes. Such issues do not seem to rise to the level of policy and governance and result in hesitancy of staff to use professional judgment in undertaking such projects.

**Undertake space planning based on what is best for customers and staff**

Some significant work space changes have been made in recent years. While perhaps well intended, they present some challenges for department operations, ease of access for community members and perceptions about open government. These issues are summarized below.

**Move City Manager’s Office to central and accessible location.** In the original design which converted the old high school building to city offices in the 1980s, the City Manager’s suite was centrally located with a service window opening into the main hallway of the building. The Manager’s office is now located in the far eastern corner of the building with no public access. To gain access to the office, visitors are to report to an enclosed lobby/room that serves the Human Resources and City Clerk suite. The room, until recently, was separated from staff with seemingly bullet proof glass creating the impression that the public is a threat. The visitor is then escorted down the main hallway, through a door marked “staff only,” through a complex of cubicles for finance staff and then through another door to enter the City Manager’s waiting area. It should be noted that this waiting area also serves the City Council offices which have the same access restrictions. While the offices are functional, the message this arrangement sends to the public and visitors is not one of a welcoming and accessible City Manager and City Council. Consideration should be given to moving these offices to a more central location.

**Improve City Hall wayfinding system.** While a small item, the current wayfinding system at city hall illustrates how the location and flow of services, similar to the city’s website, is not intuitive. For example, when a member of the public enters the northwest door in search of the City Manager’s office, the directory sign in the hallway directs them to make a U-turn suggesting they leave the building. While I may have wished that on a few individuals during my tenure, I do not believe that is what is intended.
City Hall is oversubscribed and not vibrant as a hub of public services; the building should be re-envisioned as a hub of community engagement. The city hall space reassignments have resulted in a facility that is no longer active with community members. While the new “one-stop” development services counter at the west end of the building is deemed a success, at the east side of the building what was formerly a very active Parks and Community Service counter is now a “staff only” restricted area converted to cubicle work spaces. With this public counter converted, Parks staff has been dispersed to various locations with key members of its management team each in a different location. Consideration should be given to relocating much of the administrative and public serving elements of the Parks and Community Services Department to a central location—preferably city hall.

Move positions with minimal public interaction to other sites. To allow city hall to become a more vibrant citizen-serving center that houses the major public counters as well as an array of public meeting rooms, positions that do not interact with the public on a routine basis could be moved to other sites including 1717 Fifth Street, 1818 Fifth Street and 600 A Street. These may include IT and much of the finance staff. Analysis would need to be undertaken on the suitability of facilities and their condition. Most city office facilities, other than the Police Department, appear outdated and in need of some renovation. Some planning has already gone into some possible alternatives for better space utilization. I would encourage some moves to proceed in the near-term and not wait for a “Grand Plan” that will likely take years to achieve. This is not to suggest that a thoughtful and long-term space plan is not required—it is. Certain facilities have likely exceeded their useful life without significant investment or replacement. For example, the Community Development trailer on the west side of city hall is settling into the ground and can no longer be jacked up and the city hall tower may be developing a Pisa-like lean.

Recalibrate migration of Public Works management to city hall. Public Works engineering functions and administration were moved to city hall. Some of these moves were in support of a “one-stop” counter shared with Community Development and Finance. However, it seems that many more staff were moved than required to support the counter function and coordination with planning activities. This has greatly added to city hall space being oversubscribed and has left the corporation yard with vacant and unutilized office spaces. While those spaces in the corporation yard may not be ideal, neither is the crowded and unwelcoming nature of city hall. This has also resulted in a situation where Public Works crews (located at the corporation yard) do not have as much interaction with engineering and administration (who are now at city hall).
Re-evaluate City Hall Friday closures
Staff at city hall work a base of 80 hours over nine days allowing city hall to be closed every other Friday. While this provides for desired flexibility for some staff, for others it may create challenges related to childcare and other obligations with the earlier start and later departure required to accommodate this schedule.
From a customer standpoint, city hall is closed 10% of normal business hours. While not a matter of controversy, many in the community are still surprised when the facility is not open on certain Fridays. The city should examine offering flexible scheduling that is more customized to individual needs of staff members that could also allow city hall to remain open during all weekdays to improve customer service. Similarly, closures in and around the winter holidays appear more extensive than surrounding communities.

Develop methods to gain feedback from service customers
It is unclear how departments gain feedback from customers of various services. Some standard methods should be developed to better gauge improvements or deterioration of service.

Citizen outreach and communication efforts are laudable
While still relatively new, efforts to better engage citizens through an online newsletter and a mobile phone application to submit service requests and complaints are laudable. Maximizing the number of community members who are aware of these resources may be a challenge, but offering these new tools is very positive. The should be better coordination in launching technology such as the phone app to ensure field staff responding to work requests are part of the project design and implementation.

Given staff comments about the lack of internal communication, equal attention should be given to the development of internal communication tools. Departments now provide a weekly activity update to the City Council. Departments vary in sharing this report with staff; therefore, the City Manager should distribute this item to staff directly.

Establish a standard for adoption of city council minutes and address backlog
At the time of this writing the most recent minutes of the City Council available on the city website are from June 25, 2013. A nineteen month backlog is excessive in the extreme. Much of this issue may be due to the City Clerk function becoming more complex. For example, the position is responsible for assembling responses to numerous (and voluminous) public information requests, managing the local election compliance process, and recently took over responsibility for minutes of...
the Planning Commission. A plan, including definition of the resources required, should be developed to address this backlog. I also recommend a tiered approach where current meetings have minutes returned for adoption within several weeks, while the backlog is addressed separately. Without intervention, at the present pace and with the current approach, the current City Council will never review minutes of its own meetings.

The Author
John Meyer served as a vice chancellor at UC Davis from 2000-14. Previously, he served for ten years as the Davis city manager. He has also held various consulting positons. He holds a Bachelor’s of Arts degree from UC Davis and a Master’s in Public Administration from the University of Southern California.

The report was prepared as a pro bono service to the city manager.
Appendix A

Recent management review and project reports

City of Davis—Public Works Department
Organizational Structure Efficiency and Effectiveness Study
Management Partners, Inc., July 2011

Summary Review of Finance Division Operations for the City of Davis
Kevin Harper, December 2012

Community Services Business Plan
Shellito Training and Consulting, November 2013

Parks Maintenance Management Plan
Shellito Training and Consulting, September 2013

Parks Cost of Services Study
Shellito Training and Consulting, Pros Consulting, April 2013

Recreation Program Cost of Services Study
Shellito Training and Consulting, Pros Consulting, April 2013

Davis Community Pool: Feasibility Study
Aquatics Design Group, January 2013

Veterans’ Memorial Center Complex Feasibility Study
Hibser Yamauchi Architects, Inc., January 2013
A proposal for
Organizational review of general government operations for the City of Davis

Submitted by John Meyer

SUMMARY OF PURPOSE AND AREAS OF INQUIRY

With a newly constituted city council and newly appointed city manager, it is timely to review several aspects of the City of Davis organization and address several questions:

Does the city’s current structure contribute to progress toward the goals of the City Council and City Manager? Does the organization foster a customer service personality desired by both leadership and the public? Does the current staff organization provide for clarity of responsibility and a logical deployment of staff to various service areas? Is there pride expressed by management, staff and the public in the quality of city services? After difficult, yet necessary, budget reductions are there organizational modifications that would assist in fostering a positive approach to municipal services?

Through a review of organizational structure and climate, recommendations will be presented to address the questions highlighted above. It is anticipated that this will be a limited engagement and will rely primarily on review of city documents and interviews with staff, city leadership and others familiar with city services. Recommendations will be presented in an abbreviated format which highlights trends and possible follow-up actions while allowing for a prompt conclusion of the project.

SPECIFIC COMPONENTS OF REVIEW

This engagement is designed to provide counsel to the city manager on organizational, climate and customer service issues. The project will focus on general government services and will exclude public safety departments (i.e., Police and Fire Departments).

Organizational Structure

Review of each department’s organization including service offerings, reporting relationships and spans of control. This will include review of each department’s mission/vision/values statement, annual work plans and each plan’s relationship to the annual budget. Alternatives will be presented should organizational changes be warranted.

Organizational Climate

Through interviews with a sample of staff, assess issues related to climate and morale including support of management and leadership, enthusiasm for city’s mission, and commitment to public service. To determine if there is alignment between city goals and work plans, assess if annual evaluations and
work plans are developed for each employee. In addition, assess the quality of communication between city leadership and staff.

**Customer Service Orientation**

Undertake brief overview of ease of access to city services by the public. For example, is there ready access to city staff and information on programs? This includes review of websites and physical locations. This will also focus on some review of the physical arrangements and scheduling where access to staff and services to the public which may not be optimized.

**Assist with Executive Recruitments**

If requested, assist with components of executive recruitments including outreach and assessment.

**SUPPORT REQUIRED FROM CITY TO INITIATE WORK**

- Organization charts (which include all employees) for all non-safety departments.
- Mission, vision, values statement of each department and annual work plans and metrics.
- Assistance in managing interviews including scheduling and provision of meeting space.
- Access to VISIO or similar software.

**LIMITED NATURE OF ENGAGEMENT**

It anticipated that preliminary findings will be reported after approximately 120 hours of work (excluding any assistance with executive recruitments). The need for more extensive effort will be evaluated at that time. The engagement may be discontinued at any time by the city manager.

**JOHN MEYER: PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

- Vice Chancellor, UC Davis (July 2000-June 2014)
- City Manager, Davis, CA (October 1990-June 2000)
- Consultant, Sacramento, CA (May 1989-October 1990)
- Deputy City Manager/Assistant to the City Manager, Davis, CA (March 1987-April 1989)
- Special Assistant to City Manager/Management Intern, Oakland, CA (July 1985-March 1987)
- Consultant, Sacramento, CA (October 1980-May 1985)
- Master of Public Administration, University of Southern California
- Bachelor of Arts, University of California, Davis